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539 cursed them, saying: Know what you have done, fools. You have slain the Ottoman Bey, even the Bey of the Gendarmerie himself. Now take this body and remove it far from my house, that I may not become involved in this affair.

And the slaves Ali and Hamed removed the sheet and they saw that the Bey was even as in the grip of death, and Ali said: I am astonished that we were in search of a soul without a body and we have found a body without a soul. And they asked: But where can we take this body? For wherever we leave it in the town, the Turks will find it, and they will say: The Arabs have slain the Bey of the Gendarmerie. Nor will they cease from arrests and torture until they discover the truth of this matter. And Habiba said: Wrap the body in a blanket and tie it up after the manner of a corpse, and take it to the serai. For [764 there is halted near there a caravan from Persia carrying 778] bodies for burial in the holy soil of sacred Nejf. There you may leave this body, for the camels will be unloaded for the night, and you may leave this body with the other bodies, and in the morning they will not notice that there is one body too many, and they will load it up and take it away and bury it in holy Nejf.

And Ali and Hamed put the body of the Turk in a blanket and bound it with ropes after the manner of corpses and took it to the caravan which was halted near the serai. And the camels were unloaded for the night and the corpses had been piled in a big pile, and there was no guard nor sentry over them. For who would steal this merchandise?

And the slaves put the body of the Bey in that pile, but they put him underneath and they piled on him corpses that the fresh corpse might not be on top. And the two

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slaves, Ali and Hamed, left him and went off to search for the soul of their comrade, Jaffer. 539*

Now, the Turkish Bey had not been killed by the blow of Ali the slave, but only stunned by it, and after a time his senses returned to him, and he found himself bound in a blanket and he could not move either hand or foot. And he breathed and smelled the smell of corpses, nor could he perceive any other odour.

And he thought: Verily, I am slain, and they have put me with the bodies and they are going to bury me. But my life has been a wicked life and shortly I shall be examined on my fitness to enter paradise. And the Bey wept and his heart was full of repentance, and he commenced to recite verses from the Holy Quran.

Now, the owner of the caravan was in his tent, a Persian from Shiraz, and he was calculating the profit which he would have from the bodies, for the relations and heirs of the dead had paid him a sum of money to transport the bodies from Shiraz to Nejf, and to buy a plot of land in which to bury them, and some had paid a lot of money for expensive land near to the holy shrine and others had paid a little money for land far removed from it, and they had also paid for the expenses of burial and had given donations for the holy shrine. And the Persian caravaneer had the record of these sums in his book. 539* 764 778

And he thought: If I continue this journey to Nejf and disburse all these various sums, then the profit which will remain for me will be small, and it will not recompense me for all this trouble and the everlasting smell of these corpses. Rather should I do another thing, I should dump these bodies in the high desert where none may see them, and the jackals and the vultures will have a profit from 539*

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the right to establish and maintain schools for the instruction of their members in their own languages, and provides that government appointments shall be made without discrimination in accordance with capacity. Parliament must, by law, contain six Christian deputies; the provision for a similar number of Jewish deputies was cancelled after the emigration of 1951–2 had left the Jewish community insufficient members to qualify for representation.

It is absolutely impossible to reckon with any accuracy the strength of the various religious communities. At a very rough approximation the Muslims might be estimated at 4½ million, Christians at 150,000, Jews (since the emigration of some 130,000) at something less than 10,000, and other groups at 50,000.

(*a*) *Islam*

The Sunni and Shii sects are suspicious and intolerant of each other, as are also the Arab and Kurdish members of the Sunni group. Statistics are lacking, but it would appear that the Shiis slightly outnumber the Sunni Arabs and are less than Sunni Arabs and Kurds combined.

The Sunnis live mainly in the north of Iraq and in the *liwas* of Baghdad, Diala, and Dulaim. There is one notable Sunni shrine in the country, that of Shaikh Abdul-Qadir al-Gailani, whose mosque and tomb in Baghdad are a centre of pilgrimage from regions as remote as India.

The Shiis form a majority in the central *liwas* of Kut, Diwaniya, Kerbela, and Hilla and in the southern *liwas* of Basra, Amara, and Muntafiq. Their religious life has as its background the four Holy Cities of Kerbela, Najaf, Kadhimain, and Samarra and their shrines. Najaf is the burial place of Ali, the first Imam; Kerbela of Hussain, the third Imam. Thousands of Shiis from Persia, Afghanistan, and India take part in the traditional pilgrimages to the Holy Cities, where, during the first ten days of the religious month of Muharram, is enacted the famous Passion Play commemorating the death of Hussain ibn Ali at the battle of Kerbela in A.D. 680. The Shii Mujtahids exercise not only religious but at times also political influence, as was demonstrated in the tribal insurrection of 1920 and on numerous subsequent occasions. The Shiis are rectifying their exclusion under Ottoman rule from political and administrative power and their non-participation in advanced education; some recent Cabinets have contained more than four Shiis, and in 1953–4 there was a Shii Prime Minister.